

APPROVED FOR RELEASE: 2007/02/09: CIA-RDP82-00850R000100030061-0

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JPRS L/8358

28 March 1979

TRANSLATIONS ON NEAR EAST AND NORTH AFRICA
(FOUO 11/79)

NEAR
EAST

NORTH
AFRICA

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BIBLIOGRAPHIC DATA SHEET		1. Report No. JPRS L/ 8358	2.	3. Recipient's Accession No.																																																				
4. Title and Subtitle TRANSLATIONS ON NEAR EAST AND NORTH AFRICA, (FOUO 11/79)		5. Report Date 28 March 1979		6.																																																				
7. Author(s)		8. Performing Organization Rept. No.		10. Project/Task/Work Unit No.																																																				
9. Performing Organization Name and Address Joint Publications Research Service 1000 North Glebe Road Arlington, Virginia 22201		11. Contract/Grant No.		13. Type of Report & Period Covered																																																				
12. Sponsoring Organization Name and Address As above		14.																																																						
15. Supplementary Notes																																																								
16. Abstracts The serial report contains information on socio-economic, government, political, and technical developments in the countries of the Near East and North Africa.																																																								
17. Key Words and Document Analysis. 17a. Descriptors																																																								
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17c. COSATI Field/Group SD, SC, SK, 15																																																								
18. Availability Statement For Official Use Only. Limited Number of Copies Available From JPRS.		19. Security Class (This Report) UNCLASSIFIED	21. No. of Pages 9																																																					
		20. Security Class (This Page) UNCLASSIFIED	22. Price																																																					

FORM NTIS-38 (REV. 3-72)

THIS FORM MAY BE REPRODUCED

USCOMM-OC 14852-P72

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JPRS L/8358

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NORTH AFRICAN AFFAIRS

POLISARIO'S TAN-TAN ATTACK RENEWS ALGERIAN-MOROCCAN TENSION

Madrid CAMBIO 16 in Spanish 18 Feb 79 pp 48-49

[Text] The Algerian military now control the government thanks to Colonel Chadli's election as president. The Algerian commitment to the Polisario Front [People's Front for the Liberation of the Western Sahara] and the Saharan military successes against Morocco are increasing the possibility of a direct confrontation between Algiers and Rabat.

The process of electing the Algerian president took place against the backdrop of the events of the war in the Sahara. The naming of Bendjedid Chadli to succeed Houari Boumediene shows the Algerian Army's predominance over the other groups that were contending for power.

All the groups within Algeria's FLN were agreed, however, in their support of the Polisario Front in its struggle against Morocco. But Chadli's assumption of the Algerian presidency as a representative of the army provided the Saharans with decisive support at a time when the Polisario Front was launching its so-called "Houari Boumediene" offensive against Morocco.

The military actions ended with the occupation of a Moroccan city--Tan-Tan--in an operation in which the Polisario Front used sophisticated weapons and demonstrated extraordinary maneuvering ability. Morocco placed direct responsibility for the attack on Algeria and announced that in the future it would exercise the "right to pursue" the guerrilla fighters into Algerian territory.

With Mauritania out of the Saharan War, the Algerian-backed Polisario Front is now operating on a single front. Saharan leaders have also announced that from now on they will take their actions "all the way into Moroccan territory." This course of events seems to presage a further increase in the danger of a direct military confrontation between Morocco and Algeria.

Ten days ago Algeria accused Morocco before the UN Security Council of acts of sabotage and of clandestine arms shipments. The Polisario Front's military

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successes only increase the possibility of large-scale Moroccan action that could force a reaction by Algeria. The point is that the political process in Algeria now has a major protagonist: the Armed Forces.

Following a series of comings and goings, intense rumor campaigns, and colorful interpretations by the Western press, and shortly after Algeria's Fourth FLN Congress got underway on Saturday 27 January, the figure of Colonel Chadli stood out clearly as the choice for successor to the presidency.

In the early hours of the deliberations, the participants had alined themselves in definite camps.

But power--and even the delegates to the congress who were attending a party meeting for the first time knew it--was in fact in the hands of the 600 representatives of the Armed Forces and the eight members of the Revolutionary Council. All the military were dressed unostentatiously as civilians. Every notable informant in Algiers had identified Chadli as the most certain candidate for the presidency, not only because of his stand as a moderate but also because he was the army's strong man.

As commanding officer of the Oran Region for 15 years and Boumediene's right-hand officer--he had fought alongside Boumediene in the war for independence--Chadli had become a key man without whom no decision would be made.

And in the end, Chadli had to play that decisive role. The weight of the military manifested itself when the time came to reconcile the two trends that had appeared throughout the sessions.

On the one hand, there was the group calling itself "pragmatic." Observers identified its leader as Abdelaziz Bouteflika, Boumediene's minister of foreign affairs. And on the other hand, there was the more radical group headed by Col Mohammed Yahiaoui.

Bouteflika--a comrade-in-arms of the late Boumediene from the very first--is seen by his political opponents as a "reformist with pro-Western inclinations." And in fact, the minister of foreign affairs had been the only one after independence to succeed in winning General De Gaulle's confidence and establishing negotiating terms with France that were not entirely unfavorable for the former French colony. Colonel Yahiaoui, according to his critics, is "an extremist who advocates Islamic socialism," a line in which he is reportedly supported by Libya, Cuba, and the Soviet Union.

As a result, the only way to avoid a direct confrontation was to choose an "alternative providing revolutionary continuity," which is what Colonel Chadli offered.

But the army's position was not monolithic, either, since the young officers preferred Yahiaoui. In the end, the factor that decisively tipped the scales in Chadli's favor was the colonel's prestige and the power he holds. Being

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in command of the Second Military Region means, in practice, having 65 percent of the Algerian Army under his orders.

The choice of the man to succeed Boumediene was not the only area of friction and debate during the sessions. The most fiery debates concerned reform of the structures of power and the shape of the new line that would characterize the next stage of the Algerian Revolution.

A series of reforms eventually won the approval of the majority, and it was agreed to implement a number of measures provided by the 1967 Constitution, one such measure being the appointment of a prime minister. The president will also be assisted in his administration by a still-undefined number of vice presidents. The final communique vaguely mentions "several" without specifying exactly how many.

Chadli was able to defeat Yahiaoui's followers, who wanted to make the latter secretary general of the party if he was not elected president, but their proposal failed, and the post of secretary general remains linked to that of the chief of state.

The Algerian media consistently placed more emphasis on the changes effected within the party than on the actual choice of Chadli. The new makeup of the Political Bureau, which has 26 members, is a clear indication of the balance that prevails. Neither Yahiaoui's radicals nor Bouteflika's liberals have been excluded from it. That delicate balance would seem to contradict the precipitate rejoicing noted in some European capitals, which saw Yahiaoui as Moscow's man and viewed Chadli as a driving force of Algeria's "Westernization."

Old-New Names

While the FLN Congress served to prove that power continues to rest almost exclusively in the hands of the army, it also confirmed an old thesis upheld by Boumediene: the party is the "transmission belt," since the army represents not only the backbone of the nation but also its "political soul."

A phase of collegial power is now beginning, with Chadli in the position of top leadership and the Armed Forces exercising unquestionable tutelage. Following the referendum of Wednesday the 7th, there is still a question mark with regard to two key posts: assistant secretary of the FLN and prime minister. The latter might be chosen by the National Assembly.

Beyond the speculation about names, it became increasingly clear throughout the sessions of the congress that no matter who the candidate was, "the path to socialism in Algeria is now irreversible," to quote Chadli's statement when he was proclaimed president. In the almost 2 months since Boumediene's death, there has been nothing to indicate that there will be any important changes in established policy on either the domestic or the foreign level.

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Chadli will have to try to hold on to the position that Boumediene had won among the leaders of the Third World as a result of the momentum imparted to the Movement of Nonaligned Nations; he will have to remain an ideological ally of the socialist bloc while simultaneously keeping the United States and France as his country's principal commercial customers.

Also vital will be his role in the delicate balance of the Maghreb at a time when, after 3 years of war in the Western Sahara, a few pieces are beginning to change position.

Since the military coup that overthrew President Moktar Ould Daddah in July of last year, Mauritania has not seemed disposed to continue its commitment to a war that it is in no position to pursue. Since the unilateral cease-fire decreed by the Polisario Front a few days after the coup, Mauritania has been engaged in dialog with the Saharan representatives in search of a path to peace. At the same time, the Moroccan Army has had to withdraw the 9,000 men it had stationed in Mauritanian territory at the request of that country's government.

The Polisario Front--whose Minister of Information Salem Ould Salek was the only foreign representative invited to the FLN Congress--last week presented to the press the Moroccan prisoners captured during the attack on Tan-Tan on 28 January. Morocco tried at first to deny that the attack had taken place, then downplayed its importance, and finally said that it had killed 200 members of the Polisario Front during the battle. Speaking to CAMBIO 16, a Saharan representative rejected the Moroccan claim, explaining that if it were true, the 'Alawi regime would at least have exhibited the corpses.

What we can say, without as yet putting our money on either of those two claims, is that Tan-Tan seems to have revived tension in North Africa and renewed the friction between Algiers and Rabat.

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IRAN

LEFTISTS DEFY KHOMEYNI IN SECOND ROUND OF REVOLUTION

Paris PARIS MATCH in French 2 Mar 79 pp 67, 81

[Article by Georges Menant: "I Have Seen Thousands of Fedayeen Defying Khomeyni"]

[Text] It did not take long. The second round of the revolution has begun--and much sooner than expected--between the Ayatollah's religious republic and the lay and Marxist forces of the left. For one side, the revolution is over, since the Shah has been dethroned and the law of the Koran is the law of the land. For the other side, nothing has been achieved, since the state of society remains unchanged and the dictatorship of the proletariat has not replaced the dictatorship of the tyrant. We have a diametric contradiction, which threatens to produce, at any moment, a fresh eruption. On Friday I saw the duel engaged. That morning the city was shaken on its awakening by the stupefying news: "Four generals were executed during the night." They were the chief of Savak, the commander of the airborne troops and the military governors of Teheran and Ispahan, the four most detested figures of the imperial regime. All the details of the execution were revealed. It took place in the courtyard of the school where Ayatollah is housed and practically under his windows. The four generals were lined up facing the wall, their wrists tied and their eyes bandaged. A young moudjahid, chosen by the families of the martyrs, approached them from behind and fired a bullet from a pistol into the neck of each one. Then bursts of machinegun fire hit the bodies lying on the ground. But we know practically nothing about the trial which preceded the execution. We know only that the four men were seated under a sign quoting a passage from the Koran declaring that he who has killed must be killed. We know, too, that the tribunal was composed half and half of religious and jurists, and that some of the parents of the martyrs were present at the judgment. But how was the trial prepared? Did the accused even have a defender? All of that remains a mystery. Which opens up truly alarming horizons on the concepts of the Islamic republic in matters of justice. In fact, these four summary executions had only one objective: to calm the leftist opposition at least for a time. But, exactly the opposite was to happen. Early in the afternoon a procession of 20,000 fedayeen crossed the city and headed toward the Ayatollah's residence.

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Heading the procession was a portrait of the Iman, affectionately framed with carnations. But behind, banners announced their real colors: "We want an army of the people," "This army is poisoned." For 4 long hours, the demonstrators besieged General Khomeyni's headquarters. Nothing discouraged them. Neither the interminable wait imposed on them, nor the black muzzles of the machineguns which the Ayatollah's Praetorian guard trained on them. From the crowd--which included numerous opposition officers in uniform--rose slogans and increasingly virulent invectives. People explained to us: "Khomeyni is always talking of the future, but we must act now. We respect the Ayatollah as a religious leader. But we demand the right to criticize him as a political leader. His government is composed of bourgeois and national capitalists. We shall never accept the Bazargans and Sandjabis who are owners of factories. They executed some generals, but it was to shut their mouths." Stamping their feet, they chanted: "We want to talk to the Ayatollah. Khomeyni must listen to the people." Finally, a loudspeaker answered them: the Ayatollah cannot receive them. He has been ill for the last 3 days--which is a shameless lie since a morning communique had announced that the Iman had just received a group of 180 person--but he gave them assurance that the Islamic republic will respect all opinions. In the meantime, they must realize that this government is provisional and that its decisions are not binding on the future. This waffle was received with jeers and catcalls. The demonstration continued for a long time thereafter, but finally the demonstrators dispersed into the night. The fedayeen had not seen the Ayatollah. But they had achieved their real objective. The myth had suffered its first blow. This sacrilegious show made a big impression in the city.

The next day, Saturday, was to be a test-day: it was the day set by the Ayatollah for the return to work. Beginning early in the morning, the Bazaar had resumed its usual folkloric appearance. The merchants were all there, crouching over their stocks of food, carpets, or spices, amber beads in hand, munching sunflower seeds while keeping an eye on the customers. For them the revolution was over. It had had only one objective: to overthrow the Shah's government and the new class of businessmen it had engendered. The Bazaar keepers had supported the revolution with their money. And now they meant to recover their stake. To start things going again, they were offering candies and pistachio nuts to passerbys. And interminable lines stretched out at the doors of several restaurants, where the owners had vowed to offer a free kebab to one and all in the event of victory. Outside housewives rushed to buy fruit and vegetables displayed in pyramids. The reappearance of shaving cream made the men appear more presentable, after days of unkempt beards. But the level of business remained low.

As the result of the general strike, the lack of wages was felt everywhere. Yet the Bazaar could still create an illusion. In the major services, banking, insurance, transportation, the doors remained closed. For technical reasons, it was stated officially: it would take several days more

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to put the machinery back into operation. But in a number of factories around Teheran people had roundly refused to go back to work: there would be no return to work until the government had clearly stated its intentions. And in many places, the trade unions had tied their attitude to the reorganization of the army, in the way the fedayeen were demanding. And in Abadan, one of the most strategic centers, oil production remained at 700,000 barrels a day, that is to say just enough production to meet the needs of the country. As for exports, the unions were demanding a complete renegotiation of foreign contracts before turning the pump on again. And to all of these uncertainties were added the convulsions which had been felt throughout the week in several big cities of the nation. Such as the one in Tabriz, where after fighting which had resulted in several hundred deaths, the army was practically split into three sections: one which had rallied to the Ayatollah, another which had made common cause with the fedayeen and a third which had taken to the marquis with its tribes who remained loyal to the Shah. To this was to be added the insecurity prevailing by the insurrection having resulted in an increase of banditry of all kinds.

Such was the nation, ravaged, divided and threatened, where Yasir 'Arafat was to land Sunday evening: an 'Arafat who had seldom been seen to demonstrate his joy with such exuberance. It is true that the change in Iran represents an enormous asset for the Palestinian cause. The money from Iranian oil might, in fact, permit the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] to stand a little aloof from its usual "hard" or "moderate" financiers. The problem now is to know with what camp the Ayatollah means to align his country. And there, too, the Iranian fedayeen will play a decisive role. They have already chosen their camp: on Friday one of their leaders revealed to me that the objective of the attack on the U.S. Embassy was to exchange the captured Americans for some Palestinian prisoners held in Israel. A bluff or a reality? In any case, as 'Arafat himself has said, events in Iran represent for this already dangerously agitated part of the world, "a real cataclysm" in the midst of which the dice are still rolling. For the moment the only winners in the affair appear indeed to be the Russians. Moscow equally feared two things: the Shah's victory, which would have strengthened the American positions in the region; and his defeat, to the extent that it would have resulted in the establishment of a power Islamic republic, on the borders of Soviet Islam, whose nationalist tendencies are becoming increasingly strong. Today, we see the Russians winning on both scores at once. The Shah's government has collapsed and the Islamic state is already demonstrating difficulty in ruling. From now on Moscow has only to wait for the third round, its own.

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ABU DHABI LOAN--The Abu Dhabi Fund for Arab Economic Development (FADEA) on 6 February granted Morocco a loan of 1,875,000 dinars, about 7.25 million dollars, for a 3-year term with interest at 3.75 percent, then 4.5 percent and 4.75 percent. The president-director general of the Moroccan National Economic Development Bank (BNDE) was in Abu Dhabi 4-5 February. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 16 Feb 79 p 442]

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